

TALES OF THE PINERIES

BY HAZEL GARLAND.

OLD MOSINEE TOM.

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In the late fifties the Wisconsin valley above Portage was a wilderness. The lumbermen who trailed their way up the river passed through tamarack swamps so thick a deer could scarcely penetrate them, and over dry ridges clothed with splendid pine without underbrush, clean as a park and of inestimable value.

Old Mosinee mountain rose out of the wide, green reach of the valley, dark with his robe of pines. All about was forest land untouched by the ax, almost untraversed by the pioneer's rustic foot.

But year by year the loggers pushed northward, seeking points where the pine trees could be felled into the river, or where skidways could be constructed to make hauling unnecessary. The whole river had been ransacked and every favorable river point stripped of its timber before the movement back into the forest began.

Two young boys from La Crosse county in 1850 pushed up the river to "Ginny Bull falls," and being attracted by old Mosinee mountain planted their camp at its foot and set about preparing for winter. They were beyond any other camp so far as they knew, and when they blazed out a trail in September they had before them a great deal of stern labor.

They had to cut in the marshes, wood to clear out and shanties to build. They were sturdy young fellows, of that indomitable sort raised up in America to do such work in face of everything.

Holland was a bridegroom of only three months' duration, and his wife was expected to be the cook for the camp when the snows came and work of logging actually began.

Miller, his companion, was a short man, inclined to be fat when food and sleep were plenty. He was forever grumbling, and yet was a great joker. He assumed great airs at times, and told how well he lived at home. This he did when it would embarrass the cook. He was, in fact, a comedian.

The work was hard, the face more notorious, and his patience really gave out during a severe sickness which came upon him during October. He came to be dead again, but he grumbled about Holland's cooking more and more.

"I don't want to say anything against your cooking, Hank. It's good, what there is of it, but I'd like to have the boys turn up with Mrs. Holland and some grub."

"You don't want to see her any worse than I do, old man."

"Of course not."

"You ought to stand it if I can," Holland concluded.

Miller turned his slip-jack over twice before he cut it and began eating.

"Seems to me these things git leatherer n' leatherer every day. I may be mistaken."

He worked his jaws meditatively on the problem.

"All in y'r eye; you're a little off y'r food. I guess—Lampers down or something."

In secret Holland was a little bit worried about his partner. He changed the subject. "I heard a rifle to-day, Jack! Off to the north."

"Doe, Adams, I guess."

"No; the Doc. wouldn't be up here so soon as that. It's some other party."

Miller took little interest in this, but worked away stubbornly on his slip-jacks. Suddenly his jaws stiffened and his eyes distended.

"Hank, look there!"

On him the stranger appeared a middle-aged man, very tall, with a rugged beard. He had a long and well-kept rifle in his hands.

"Did you fire, too?" asked Holland.

"I didn't dist 't fire when he was lookin' in the window an' when he feller I couldn't see 'im till you opened the door. But we got 'im."

Miller appeared with the lantern and they all went out to the spot where the bear was last seen, but he was gone. There was blood on the ground, but not enough to trail him by.

"He's hit, but he's safe enough. If I had Zip, we'd tree him in fifteen minutes, but we might just as well give him up—without a dog," said the old man after a pause.

"All right," said Holland. "We was just eating supper. Come in an' take a snack."

"Don't care if I do," laughed the hunter.

"I didn't know y' was here till t' day," he said as he sat down at the table.

"Just made a camp myself up here a couple of miles and saw y' smoke t' day; thought I'd come down and make y' a neighborly call." He laughed again till his mouth gaped wide and his little twinkling eyes disappeared.

"Glad you did, Jack, slap in a couple o' dabs' o' that pancake mortar—this fellow seems to appreciate my cooking."

"By the way," put in Miller, as he set a couple of huge cakes sizzling, "what's your name when you're at home? Mine is Miller."

"Mine's Tom Welsh, otherwise Mostee Tom."

"I've heard of you," said Holland. "As I was sayin', thinks I'll jest drop in on 'em. So I built a fire an' I says to Zip: 'Now Zip, of boy, an' you better hug that fire party close 't the wolves 'll pinch y'—an' come down.'"

"Glad y' did," said Miller. "I'm feeling kind o' lonesome these days."

"Lonesome?" the old fellow laughed. "W'y, young man I tramp from here to Lake Superior an' never see a human being from one month's end to another, and I don't know what lonesome means. O, of course, when it's handy I like to drop in this way an' have a little confab—but that ain't gittin' lonesome."

"O, it ain't, eh?" said Miller, ironically. "Well, that's the way I feel when I get lonesome. How's that fr a mouthful?" he said, as he slid a huge cake into the stranger's plate.

"Bout my size," chuckled the old fellow, and he cut it into quarters and rolled it up like a quilt. In fact he kept Miller turning cakes till he cried out: "Look here, you must be holler clean to your boot heels."

Supper being over, they drew round the fire and lighted their pipes, and the old hunter told stories of the woods.

He knew the woods as the Indians do. He could map the whole land in the ashes of the hearth and he generalized shrewdly about the wildlife.

"A good many yarns about bears an' wolves an' painters and links (panthers and lynxes) is all bosh. Bears an' links are mostly jest as glad 't hear o' your way as you are to git out their way. They don't turn on a man unless their young uns are with 'em, or you corner 'em, or when they're mighty hungry. Most any critter 'll fight in a trap, but in a free space it's nacher' fr 'em 't run off the minute they see a man. Same way with painters in daylight, or night either. They jest pucker-ache when they see yeh."

"Ever had a tussle with 'em?"

"O yes, but I've never had 'em turn on me except when I began the fuss. Then they'll fight fr dear life jest like a man will."

"How about wolves?" asked Miller, with a significant look at Holland, who has wolf stories to spare.

The old man's face grew grim and he drew several whiffs from his pipe before he answered:

"Wolves are different; they're vicious, no two ways about that. They mean fight."

"Especially when a lot o' 'em git together."

The old man went on: "Wolves ain't cowardly, as some folks say. They've got sense and judgment. They know how to size up the other fellow 'sot not 't tackle a crowd they can't whip. They're all-fired smart, wolves is. They don't walk into any trap, but they'll eat a feller up quicker'n lightning when the chance is good. They don't walk into a trap and they don't bluster—they mean biz."

He sat with his pipe in his mouth, his hands over his knees and his eyes fixed on the fire. His voice began to take on a reminiscent tone.

The sound of the wind in the pines outside stirred through the silence with a somber note, and Holland stirred up the fire in the vast fireplace till it roared louder than the wind.

don't go into no such business; he jests limps off in the woods and swears vengeance."

Holland here related a story of a siege by wolves through which he had been. Long Tom listened with an occasional corroborative nod.

"That's jest it; they're shorps. Seems if they can smell a sick or wounded man ten miles. I used to live down 't Portland when I was a boy, an' I know what a shark is. A wolf is a wolf in the water. A wolf is a shark in the woods."

A curious look came on his face, and after a silence he said: "If they ever set tooth in old Tom, he'll know his time has come to go."

"I should think you'd keep out of their way if you're afraid of them," said Holland, cautiously.

The old man straightened up. His face darkened with anger.

"Say, d'y' mean that?" he asked. "Holland saw his mistake."

"Set down. Set down! I didn't mean anything. Still you speak as if you kind o' dreaded them," he added.

"Well, I do," the hunter confessed. "But I ain't afraid of 'em. I know 'em. Know jest how to take 'em. I build a fire in front of my little shed, put a rifle handy and Zip at my feet and sleep sound 's baby in a cradle. If the fire gets low Zip growls and wakes me up and I throw on more wood."

"But some way I feel as if they'd git me yet. I'll make a mistake some day and then they'll pile on top of me an' 'at'll be the end of me. A pile of bones gnawed white. Jest such a pile as I've come across myself many a time."

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He wept like a child, and swore in his weeping as he thought of his faithful dog cowering there in the center of that circle of hungry eyes.

"To think I'd play him such a trick at last," he groaned, and swore, covering his face with his hands. "An' he's trusting in me—sayin' to them bell-hounds: 'Old Tom'll be back soon an' you'll git out o' here!' An' all the time me settin' here smokin' an' havin' a good time—my dog, it's awful! It's uncivilized to treat an old friend the way I treated that dog. Why, that dog has been with me more'n six years! He's been my only company, an' a better hunter—I can get along without that dog. My God, it's awful—awful!"

He would not go to sleep, but sat around over the fire until morning. He ate breakfast in the same gloomy silence, and then he rose.

"Well—I'll be goin'."

"Better bring y'r things down and stay with us."

"No, I guess not. If I find my rifle I'll be all right—if I only—"

He was in a softer mood now and he couldn't speak of his dog.

Holland went with him to help him find his rifle. This he did without long search.

"Well, now, come in any time. Our latch string is always out. Come back to dinner, anyway."

"Thankee—I guess I'll have to go down to Ginny to git some ammunition."

"Well, good luck."

"Good luck," he answered; but his face was sorrowful to see.

They never saw him again. They heard of him in Ginny. He bought a new outfit and struck off into the forest alone.

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For Atlantic City, 8:20 a. m. For New York, Newark and Elizabeth, 8:20 (express) a. m., 12:50 (express) with buffet parlor car 3:30 (express) p. m. Sunday, 2:15 p. m.

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For Pottsville, 8:20 a. m., 12:50 p. m. Retaining leave, New York, foot of Liberty street, North River, at 9:30 (express) a. m., 1:10, 1:30, 4:30 (express) with buffet parlor car, 6:30 p. m. Sunday, 4:30 a. m., 2:00 and 4:30 p. m. Terminal, 6:27 p. m.

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Trains will leave Scranton station for Carlisle and intermediate points at 7:20, 8:45, 10:15, 11:45 a. m., 12:30, 2:30, 3:30, 5:15, 6:15, 7:30, 8:15 and 11:20 p. m.

For Fairview, Waymart and Honesdale at 7:30, 8:55 and 10:10 a. m., 12:30, 2:30 and 3:15 p. m.

For Albany, Saratoga, the Adirondack and Montreal at 5:45 a. m., 12:30 p. m., 7:00, 8:45, 9:30 and 10:45 a. m., 12:05, 2:30, 4:30, 5:30, 6:30, 7:30, 8:15, 9:15, 10:15, 11:15 p. m.

Tr